

son; of the second, blind conformity to His good will; of the last, the immolations of fatherly charity. Who is ignorant of the two great trials that raised the chaste Joseph on the step of Pharaoh's throne, and made him the saviour of Israël ?

We shall not prolong this enumeration, as it would be hard to find, whether among the ancient Patriarchs, or the Saints of the New Testament, a single exception to the law thus dictated by the Archangel Gabriel to Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee."

(1) Happy they who learn to know the time of God's visitation and set to profit the occasion of truly loving! St Anne and St Joachim enjoyed that happiness all their life long, but especially when Mary had reached her third year.

Before obtaining her from Heaven, and by mutual agreement, they had vowed her to the Lord, and Mary, on her part, from her mother's womb, had consecrated herself to God, to serve Him in His temple. As soon as her age permitted, parents and daughter fulfilled their promise with a truly royal generosity. Without betraying any of the weaknesses of nature, whose legitimate claims might well have influenced ordinary souls, but which has no more sway on them, on whom perfect virtue has conferred self-dominion, they hastened to offer their Daughter to the Lord, and to crown by such a sacrifice all those of their long career. Alvarez de Paz indulges in the following pious reflections concerning this incomparable offering:

"At last, O Mary, pure and sacred holocaust, came the time when you were to be consecrated to the Lord, according to the vow of your parents. Penetrated with these words of the wisest of kings "If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it," (2) they hasten to lead thee to the Temple and to offer thee to God as they have promised. Their

(1) Tob, XII, 13.

(2) Eccl. V, 3.